DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 303 113 HE 022 140

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TITLE Ethics Across-the-Curriculum.
PUB DATE Oct 88
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the National Conference on Coherence in the Liberal Arts Curriculum (Denton, TX, October 20-22, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; *Ethics; General Education; Higher Education; *Integrated Curriculum; *Liberal Arts; *Professional Education; State Universities
IDENTIFIERS *Saint Cloud State University MN

ABSTRACT

One attempt to integrate the aims of liberal and professional education at a public university, St. Cloud State Univesity (St. Cloud, Minnesota), is described. The question of whether professional education precludes a coherent liberal arts curriculum is raised. At St. Cloud, relationships between the liberal arts and professional programs are primarily in the form of discrete requirements for service courses. In 1986, it received funding to implement a program in professional ethics organized around the theme of responsibility in professional life. The St. Cloud program is described, with emphasis on multidisciplinary ethics across-the-curriculum. The major elements include the development of case studies and an all-university seminar in professional ethics. The impact on faculty, students, and curriculum has been dramatic. One of the reasons it has been so successful is because it was built from the ground up. Lessons to be learned from St. Cloud include that integration must be a focus, it must be funded, and it must fit the existing reward system. (SM)

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Ethics Across-The-Curriculum

National Conference on Coherence in the Liberal Arts Curriculum
University of North Texas
Denton, Texas
October 20-22, 1988

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LIBERAL ARTS AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Coherence in the liberal arts curriculum has been fragmented by a number of forces typical of American higher education. Among the most frequently mentioned are departmentalization and the new vocationalism of the 1980s. Departmentalization has been fed by its corollary, increasingly narrow disciplinary specialization. Conservative advocates remind us that requirements for the students are also requirements for the faculty and that disciplinary specialization (or other forces such as abandonment of the "great" books) means that there are fewer faculty capable of effectively presenting a liberal arts core.

Other critics place more blame on the instrumental, vocational emphasis which is said to characterize the preferences of the students in the 1980s. An important sub-theme has been criticism of professional education for abandoning its roots in the arts and sciences. The basic argument is that the professional disciplines, often assisted by accreditation bodies, have increasingly forsaken their foundations in the traditional disciplines either by abandoning them altogether, or by substituting a "watered down" version offered under the rubric of professional course titles.

I do not wish to judge the validity of these claims, but to address the simpler question: does professional education preclude a coherent liberal arts curriculum? The answer to this question is heavily context-dependent. While professionalism may lead to the fragmentation of the liberal arts core, there is no necessary connection. In fact, as the work of Stark, et al. (*Responsive*

Professional Education: Balancing Outcomes and Opportunities. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 3. Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education, 1986.) has shown, there is a surprising degree of similarity between the professed aims of liberal and professional education.

In the material below I will describe one attempt to integrate the aims of liberal and professional education at a public university. Based on this experience I will draw some conclusions regarding the conditions which will lead to successful integration of these sometimes disparate traditions.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

The setting

St. Cloud State University is a typical institution in American higher education. With 16,500 students it is the largest campus in the Minnesota State University System and is a former normal school which has become a comprehensive university. Its general education requirement is largely based on student selection from among a list of approved courses which divided into broad, disciplinary-based categories. As on many campuses the general education requirements represent political as well as a pedagogical decisions. Relationships between the liberal arts programs and professional programs are primarily in the form of discrete requirements for "service" courses, with the most elaborate connection being in the area of teaching licensure developed in response to state requirements.

In this setting interaction among liberal arts and professional faculty was minimal. With few exceptions, such as a "business and society" course taught by a member of the philosophy department, interaction with curricular implications was virtually nonexistent. In 1986, however, the university received funding from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) to implement a program in professional ethics organized around the theme of "responsibility in professional life." This program was originally aimed at graduate education, but after the first year extended its operation to include undergraduates. Since that time it has attracted the participation of 30 faculty from programs spanning 24 departments and including participants from both professional and liberal arts disciplines.

The St. Cloud State University program

Most professional ethics programs have a single disciplinary focus, the most prominent areas being medicine, business, and law. In recent years the number of disciplinary areas involved and the number of ethics-related centers or programs has increased dramatically. In most cases these programs represent the efforts of a small number of faculty and a single course requirement or elective rather than being an academic program. The program at St. Cloud State began this way with courses in speech communication, psychology, and business.

In 1986 we sought, and received funding for a radically different type of professional ethics program, multidisciplinary ethics across-the-curriculum. The major programmatic elements were the development of case studies in conjunction with professional practitioners which would become part of existing courses in the professional disciplines and an all-university seminar in professional ethics organized around the theme of "responsibility in professional life."

The case studies were recorded in one of several possible formats for later use. They not only lend a sense of the dramatic in classroom presentation, but the practitioner has unique credibility as a spokesperson for the importance of ethics. This credibility is important for in my experience, students, especially those in professional programs, may have clear occupational aspirations, but they are often less aware of what people in these occupations must actually know and do. I think that this strategy of using practitioners to justify the importance of the liberal arts can be effective in other contexts. For example, having a practitioner in international business speak on the importance of knowing history, language, and the arts will be far more effective than any number of advisors.

One of the traditional problems in single disciplinary ethics programs is that they may take on a defensive, "how to avoid being sued" character. Another is that they rarely offer the interested student an opportunity for more advanced work. Our all-university seminar is an explicit attempt to address these problems. Virtually all the students who enroll in this course are from professional

courses which have developed an ethics segment as described above. One of the things which they most enjoy is the opportunity to see the differences and similarities in the ethical dilemmas of other professional areas. This setting offers natural opportunities for integrating ethics with the perspectives of numerous professional disciplines.

These two visible elements of the program have been built on a strong foundation which includes a faculty ethics seminar, active participation by the philosophy department, and the development of specialized resources. The seven-week faculty ethics seminar prepares the faculty member from a professional discipline to develop and implement their course segment on ethics. The topics covered include ethical theory, working with practitioners, developing the case study, and presenting the case study in class.

A philosopher has worked with the program from the outset. He has taught the faculty and all-university seminars, served as a consultant for participating professional faculty, and served as a discussant/commentator for many of the case studies. This year we are "breaking in" a second member of the department who will share these responsibilities in the future.

In order to sustain the program we have begun to develop a body of specialized resources including books and monographs, a newspaper clipping file, video tapes, conference announcements, and journal articles. In addition to managing this collection of materials our learning resources center has provided instructional development personnel who have assisted participating faculty in the recording and editing of case studies and in the development of

auxiliary materials such as handouts and slides for overhead projection.

Impact on faculty, students, and curriculum

The program has had a dramatic impact on faculty, students and curriculum. Faculty participants have found the interaction with colleagues in other disciplines helpful and stimulating. Like their students in the all-university seminar, participating faculty are surprised to find similarities in the ethical dilemmas of their professional fields. They have also discovered that faculty from fields like sociology and philosophy can contribute to their areas of pedagogical concern. The effect has been so powerful that each year faculty have come to me asking to participate!

Perhaps the most surprising impact on faculty has been the creation of opportunities for professional development. Participating faculty have been asked to take on new roles in their professional associations which are struggling with the issue of ethics. They have encountered new opportunities for teaching and research. They have been asked to give workshops and to be consultants. A faculty member from criminal justice was asked to teach his ethics course at a University of Louisville seminar for high-ranking police officials from all over the country. Another faculty member became a fellow at the University of Minnesota's Bioethics Center and has published three articles on her case study. A faculty member from accounting is writing a new text which is going to include a chapter on ethics based on his experiences. Numerous papers have been presented, including one at this year's American Psychological Association

meetings which included the faculty member, the practitioner, and our participating philosopher.

Finally, several faculty have pointed out that the pedagogical material on the preparation of the case studies has stimulated them to think more broadly about their teaching and how it can be improved.

Students have evaluated the courses very favorably. Based on our first year's teaching, 22 students (virtually all from professional programs) signed up for the first offering of the all-university seminar, a 400/500 level course in philosophy! Not only do they find the issues stimulating, but they rate the active participation required to discuss the case studies very highly.

The impact on students' ethical attitudes has been equally gratifying. They do not all become angels, or move from one set of unquestioned assumptions to another. On the contrary, they develop a healthy respect for their ethical responsibility based on how difficult it is to resolve ethical dilemmas. They are at least aware of the need to identify stakeholders, to work out the benefits of different courses of action, and to utilize ethical principles in professional decision making.

Most appropriate to the theme of this conference, the program has had a significant impact on the curriculum at St. Cloud State University. At this point 24 courses have been developed or revised spanning 22 separate disciplines. Some of the new courses have become requirements in their programs. As described above, the all-university seminar has attracted widespread student participation.

Participants are now bringing in speakers or speaking themselves to enrich the curriculum outside of the classroom. A journalism participant held a symposium involving a legal scholar, a newspaper editor, and the "reader's representative" or ombudsman from a major twin cities newspaper. An engineering professor worked with his professional association to sponsor a presentation by Roger Boisjoly, the Morton Thiokol engineer who "blew the whistle" following the space shuttle disaster. The sociology department sponsored a talk by a marketing consultant for Honeywell, Belgium who discussed ethical issues in international business.

One of the reasons that this program has been a success is that it has been built from the ground up, involving all those elements necessary to a successful academic program. Even though it has effectively demonstrated the possibility of linking the liberal arts and professional programs, it is not a formal requirement on our campus, nor is it part of our general education program. Indeed, not seeking to carve out a place in the zero-sum world of university requirements, may have been the wisest choice we have made.

THE ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION

Liberal education is in disarray because there are too many forces working against coherence. But this is hardly a new point. The critical question is how to work within existing constraints to re-establish the coherence we seek. Clearly there is no single answer to this question--different strategies will work in different contexts. I have described a strategy which has worked at a medium-size, public university. What lessons can we draw from this experience?

Integration must be a focus

While it may be obvious, in order to be successful the integration of the liberal arts and professional education, or the integration of the liberal arts, must be an explicit focus of the program. This means two things. First, there must be explicitly identified courses which fulfill this function and which collectively comprise the program. Second, within these courses explict attention is given to integrating knowledge and to developing the integrative skills of students.

All too often the "liberal arts program" is a loose collection of courses (many of which are excellent) which serves as an appendage to the major. These courses serve a variety of purposes, rarely are they dedicated to liberal or general education. If they are not dedicated to liberal or general education, on what basis is coherence established?

One mechanism for developing coherence is to focus attention in these courses on the development of integrative skills by students. Students may sit through an entire semester or quarter of a general education course without developing the integrative skills necessary to do the integration themselves. In order for students to learn integrative skills, they must be taught and they must practice them. In our program, the case studies serve as the integrative device. They require the student to learn the material on ethics and apply it to a real world setting. This meets our goal--not to turn them into liberal arts majors, but to educate them so their professional behavior is informed by the liberal arts.

Integration as an academic program

To be successful, liberal education needs to be treated as an academic program. That is, it needs to have a structured and interrelated set of courses and a faculty committed to its purposes. But it also needs to have other elements found in good academic programs such as research opportunities for faculty and students, extracurricular learning experiences such as speakers, colloquia, orientation programs, films, and exhibits. We might even think of specialized advisement and placement activities, the development of student organizations, prize competitions (e.g., for the paper which best exhibits the ideals of the liberal education program), scholarships, specialized study abroad opportunities, etc. The possibilities are many, but they are rarely realized for few faculty have the attachment that they do to their major.

Integration must fit the existing reward systems

It goes without saying that faculty will pay attention to the criteria which lead to retention, promotion, and tenure. Unless these are built into the program, faculty participation will be half-hearted. In building the program it is possible to build in opportunities for connections with professional associations, publications, peer review of teaching, organizing extracurricular events, and other activities which can be used in personnel reviews.

Integration must be funded

To be treated as an academic program integration must be funded, but unfortunately there are rarely budget lines for this item. The tendency is to look for a lump sum, continuing allocation which

will cover all the needs for the program. Experience suggests that more creative routes to sustaining the program will be necessary.

Programs can be built one piece at a time. This has several advantages. First, it means that institutional funding occurs incrementally. This calls for fewer rearrangements in the existing "agreements" about the institutional distribution of funds. Second, successful trials of the first parts of the program can be used as a lever for securing additional funds from internal or external sources. Third, it tends to build a constituency which is experienced with, and committed to, the program. Fourth, early trials may bring early payoffs to the institution and the participants. This keeps the relationship between the "expenditure" and "income" of the program in manageable terms.

Programs can be funded by a variety of sources. You may get money for extracurricular activities from one source and for faculty development activities from another. Or, you may seek the conditional commitment of institutional funds based on the success of a grant from an external source. Success in one area may lead to another.

Based on our experiences, opportunities for integrating liberal and professional education still exist. Moreover, they hold the possibility of reinvigorating the entire curriculum.